(a) whether Government are aware of the recent statement of General Loidolt, Chief of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan calling Kashmir a tormented country and accusing both India and Pakistan of playing political games;

(b) if so, whether Government have studied the details of the statement; and

(c) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Government felt that these remarks were uncalled for and took up the matter with the UN. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, under whose jurisdiction the UNMOGIP operates, disavowed the remarks made by the CMO and conveyed apologies on behalf of the UN Secretary General. Subsequently, on November 1, the Deputy Spokesman of the UN Secretary General, in response to a question from the press, said that CMOs were not allowed to make political comments without clearance from Headquarters; the General had been reminded about the extent of his competence; and that his statement did not reflect the views of the Secretary General. The CMO was summoned by the Government and was told in clear terms that his remarks were completely unwarranted and unacceptable. The CMO, in a letter addressed to the Director General of Military Operations, Army Headquarters, Government of India, conveyed apologies for his misbehaviour.

Resumption of Nuclear tests by USA

1293. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recent report in the press that the USA is considering resumption of Nuclear tests is a matter of concern and could trigger off similar actions by other countries; and

(b) if so, what would be the impact of this step on the Test Ban Treaty and other steps which have been taken over the years to prevent proliferation?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Government has seen media reports to this effect. However, the United States has officially stated recently in the course of its explanation of vote on

a resolution concerning the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly that, while the US Administration has no plans to seek Senate reconsideration of its decision of October, 1999 not to ratify the CTBT, it will maintain its moratorium on nuclear testing and asked others too to maintain theirs.

(b) The CTBT has not entered into force so far as only 41 among 44 of the so-called Annex 2 States have signed the Treaty and 31 of them have ratified it. The Treaty stipulates ratification by all the Annex 2 States for its entry into force.

India's permanent membership in the Security Council

1294. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the obstacles which United Nations has linked for the issue of permanent membership of India in the Security Council; and

(b) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) The issue of the reform and the restructuring of the UN Security Council has been under discussion at the United Nations, for several years. The UN Charter stipulates that any change in the existing structure must be approved by two-thirds of the General Assembly including all Permanent Members of the Security Council.

There is no consensus so far on any of the substantive issues involved such as the criteria for selection of new Permanent Members, the question of veto etc.

India has indicated its willingness to shoulder the responsibilities of Permanent Membership. Support for our candidature is growing. Government is continuing with its efforts to secure permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

Community Information Centres

1295. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the objective of setting up of Community Information Centres;

(b) the number of Community Information Centres set up in the country till date; and